

News and Information

From the Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs

615-741-4737 or toll free 800-342-8385

www.state.tn.us/consumer

**For Immediate Release
July 5, 2001**

**Contact:
David McCollum
Chris Allen**

**Weekly Column by David McCollum, Director
Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs
Volume 1, Issue 23**

The Cellular Revolution

Years ago, a mobile telephone was a toy only the wealthy could afford to play with. Today, almost every American has one. If you still don't have a cell phone, you are among an extreme minority which shrinks exponentially every day. If you are part of the cellular revolution, you've been noticing some changes in the industry over the past several months.

It once seemed that there were as many cell phone companies as there were cell phone users. Many of those companies have now merged, and you may not recognize the name of your own service provider. This affects you in more ways than you might think.

First, you may experience changes in your billing. What your original provider considered basic may be a costly option with the company that just bought them out. Be sure to carefully read the information you receive from these companies when they notify you of the merger. This may save you from an unpleasant surprise at the end of the month.

Second, you may experience changes in your service. Cellular phone service areas are dependent upon towers which relay your signal. If a company has sold its customer contracts to one company but some of its towers to another, you may be unable to make calls from all the locations you once did. Take the time to check out the new company's service areas to be sure you'll always be connected. A cell phone without a signal is a useless hunk of plastic.

For those of you who have been drawn into considering your first cellular phone by the ever-present advertising of these new cellular service giants, be sure to investigate the company thoroughly before you sign a contract. Read the fine print, get everything in writing, and talk to friends, family, and co-workers about their cell phone companies.

If you have questions or concerns regarding cellular phone companies or any other consumer issue, contact the Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs at 1-800-342-8385 or visit www.state.tn.us/consumer.